FIRE DEPARTMENT
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Internationally Accredited Agency

FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS FOR BARBEQUES ON BALCONIES, PATIOS AND DECKS OF RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCIES HAVING MORE THAN 2 DWELLING UNITS

The adopted Fire Code contains regulations for the use and storage of barbeques on specified balconies, patios and decks of residential structures having more than two dwelling units. These include apartments, condominiums, and townhouses (Except for townhouses located on individual parcels separated by recorded property lines).

The following are the applicable sections from the Fire Code:

308.3.1 Open-flame cooking devices. Charcoal burners and other open-flame cooking devices shall not be operated on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.

Exceptions:
1. One- and two-family dwellings
2. Where buildings, balconies, and decks are protected by an automatic sprinkler system.

308.3.1.1 Liquefied-petroleum-gas fueled cooking devices. LP-gas burners having an LP-gas container with a water capacity greater than 2.5 pounds [nominal 1 pound LP-gas capacity] shall not be located on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.

Exception: One- and two-family dwellings.

Summary of the above code:

Charcoal Barbeques – It is acceptable to store the barbeque unit on a combustible balcony (i.e. wood) but it is not acceptable to operate it on a combustible balcony or within 10 feet of combustible construction (which includes the surrounding walls and overhangs above). It is acceptable to operate the barbeque on a balcony if the balcony, deck, overhangs and adjacent walls are of non-combustible construction or if the balcony is protected overhead by an automatic fire sprinkler system.

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG/Propane) Barbeques – It is not acceptable to store or operate an LPG barbecue with a propane fuel container size greater than one pound on a combustible balcony or within 10 feet of combustible construction (which includes the surrounding walls and overhangs above). There is no exception for automatic fire sprinklers.

Frequently Asked Questions:

When did these new requirements become effective?

January 1, 2008

Which municipalities have adopted Fire Code regulations for barbeques?

All municipalities in Santa Clara County have adopted the Fire Code regulations for barbeques.

Can electric barbeques be used on combustible balconies and decks without restriction?

Yes.

Are natural gas fueled barbeques subject to the same regulations as LPG fueled units?

No. However, they are still subject to the regulations of section 308.3.1 (shown above) for open flame cooking devices.

Can I convert my LPG barbeque to natural gas?

Yes, if done in accordance with the barbeque device manufacturer's specifications.

What types of materials are considered combustible construction and what types are considered non-combustible construction?

Wood or vinyl siding, wood decking and fabric awnings are examples of combustible construction. For the purposes of these regulations, stucco covered walls/ceilings, concrete or tiled floors and wood railings facing the exterior (not between units) will be considered to be non-combustible construction. Note that certain composite deck and railing materials may also be considered non-combustible for the purposes of these regulations. Check with the Fire Department for approval.

Can I store my charcoal barbeque on my combustible balcony as long as I no longer use it?

Yes. However, first check with your building manager/owner as there may be more restrictive rules regarding barbeques for the property.

Can I store my LPG gas barbeque on my combustible balcony as long as I no longer use it?

Yes, but only if the fuel tank is removed. However, first check with your building manager/owner as there may be more restrictive rules regarding barbeques for the property. Note that the removed fuel tank may not be stored on the balcony, within 10 feet of combustible construction or inside of any enclosed structure. TANKS CANNOT BE STORED ON THE INSIDE OF A DWELLING UNIT.

Can I connect together (manifold) multiple smaller camp stove size LPG containers to use in place of the larger size LPG tank to fuel my barbeque?

No.

Are there other restrictions I should be aware of regarding the use of propane fuel?

Yes, if your building has more than one dwelling unit above the first floor, you must transport the LPG/propane containers to your unit via an open exterior stairway. It is not acceptable to transport propane containers greater than one-pound capacity inside the common building areas, i.e. enclosed interior stairways and elevators.

Who do I call if someone is using their barbeque in non-compliance with these regulations and I want to report it?

Call your building manager/owner to report the incident or contact the Fire Department's Fire Prevention office during normal business hours (Monday-Friday) to register a complaint.

If I install a fire sprinkler on my balcony, can I use a barbeque?

No, the entire building requires a fire sprinkler system not just the balcony area.